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ABSTRACT

This essay aims at conceptual clarification within the field of curriculum. The concepts of curriculum theory, design, and practice are approached from the point of view of axiology. The argument presented is based on a distinction between value principles and value judgments and the type of justification involved in reasoning about such principles and judgments of value. It is asserted that nonnormative grounds may be found for justifying educational value principles although the principles have a normative function with regard to curricular practice. Further, the level of classroom practice is characterized as normative and involving the use of value judgments. Theorizing within the field of curriculum is thus defined as a nonnormative endeavor aimed at marking off a domain of educational value (to be distinguished from domains of moral, aesthetic, political, religious and other types of value). A curriculum theory is a set of value principles on this account, while a design is factual in nature and serves as a bridge between theory and practice. Curricular practice consists of judgments and actions based on judgments of educational value. Curricular practice is, therefore, normative. (Author)

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VALUE PROBLEMS AND CURRICULUM DECISIONS

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We in curriculum have been told in the recent past to forego theorizing and concentrate on practice. In short, we were told (or perhaps we heard incorrectly) that we should follow the action--or inter-action--as the case may be. As existing practice has come under scrutiny; however, it is slowly being realized that this isn't where it's at. While some of us, in curriculum continue the war between theory and practice by arguing over behavioral objectives, indivdualized instruction, or whatever other idols the market will bear, others in the field have abdicated their responsibility for making curricular decisions by importing British Primary education in some misshapen form or by worshipping at the altar of relativism in the form of offering a plethora of hastely contrived alternatives. Few curriculum specialists seem to have exercised their Freedom in or taken seriously the responsibility for making choices--which is an existentialist's way of accusing the profession of being inauthentic, of having ignored value choices. In short, it is being suggested that the value problem with regard to curriculum decisions is that curriculum decision makers have not dealt with the problems of value and valuing.

Probably the most ignored paper presented at the 1949 conference on curriculum held at the University of Chicago (the conference at which Tyler presented a glimpse of his four infamous questions) remains George Barton's essay suggesting the need for curriculum specialists to turn to axiology--the general theory of value--for help in dealing with problems of value. Another indication of our avoidance of value issues and problems may be the fact that most contemporary worshippers of Dewey's position fail to pay attention (or possibly fail to mention the attention they have payed) to Dewey's extensive work in axiology. An understanding of Dewey's position with regard to valuing and value; however, may be necessary to adequately and accurately explicating Dewey's educational theory.

While an historical argument supporting the notion that values and valuing have been ignored by curriculum specialists might prove enlightening, it may be more fruitful to pursue our present problems with regard to values more directly.

Let's begin our pursuit then with a distinction borrowed from a philosopher by the name of Margolis. The distinction is between value principles and value judgments. A value principle (or more likely a set of value principles) marks off a domain of value--that is, is the basis for distinguishing between aesthetic and ethical domains of value, between ethical and political domains of value, and so forth. An example of a possible moral principle might be: "The morally good is that which gives pleasure." Such a principle is invoked in the justification of a judgment of the value of an action, thing, person, or state-of-affairs. It denotes what reasons are relevant to the justification of defense of a value judgment in a given domain of value. Specifically, our exemplary principle suggests that pleasure is relevant in passing judgment as to the moral goodness or rightness of an object, action, person, thing or state-of-affairs. To justify a judgment--given our principle--we must somehow indicate that a thing, action or other object

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of judgment gives pleasure. A value judgment attributes the predicate good to an action, person, state-of-affairs, object, or thing. An example of a value judgment within the moral domain (given our exemplary principle of pleasure) might be: "That was a good thing you did." or "Sex is good.", or "You ought to do such and such." where the justification for these judgments would be that such-and-such gives pleasure.

Examing value judgments first, a question may be raised as to how we justify or support a judgment. How do you prove, in a sense, that "Sex is good." if someone calls your judgment into question. As suggested in the prior discussion of judgments, a value principle is somehow involved in justifying a judgment. Thus, a hedonist who is questioned about his judgment that "Sex is good." might argue as follows:

That which gives pleasure is good	(Principle of Value.)
Sex gives pleasure.	(A "finding" or "fact".)
Therefore, sex is good.	(A value judgment.)

If we accept his principle--that that which gives pleasure is good--the only way in which we can reasonably deny his judgment is to deny his "finding" of "factual" claim that sex gives pleasure. We may engage in a "factual" or non-normative debate (or maybe in scientific inquiry) to determine the validity of his "factual" claim if we accept his principle of value but not his judgment of value. Assuming we were to find that his "facts" were correct and that we were in agreement with his principle of value, it would be unreasonable to deny his judgment. If, on the other hand, we do not accept his value principle (that the pleasurable is good), we are likely to engage mistakenly in a non-productive argument focusing on the judgment that sex is good--an argument which is apt to amount to little more than shouting back and forth "Yes it is good." - "No it isn't." Typically, it seems that the principle involved in justifying a judgment is ignored or goes unrecognized when a judgment is called into question. This sort of non-productive argument suggested with regard to disputes over judgments of value seem to characterize many of the disputes and discussions within the field of curriculum. For example, the war waged over behavioral objectives degenerated at one point to the level of categorical bumper stickers and buttons.

If we were to sort out the actual debate over objectives, we might be surprised to find that one opponent of behavioral objectives, Elliot Eisner, probably agreed in principle with the writers of the taxonomies of educational objectives. Both Eisner and the writers of the taxonomies we would find, probably disagreed in principle with proponents of performance objectives.

At the level of curricular practice and implementation, education has attempted to deal with what has been variously discussed as "cultural diversity", "cultural differences," "cultural deprivation" or "cultural pluralism". In the discussion and debate over such topics, a distinction has probably seldom if ever been made between differences with regard to principle and differences with regard to judgments or practices. It is likely that different cultural groups may share what some anthropologists call "universal" values while differing with regard to "particularized" values. This may be another way of saying, that individuals share principles but disagree as to judgments. It is also possible, of course, that individuals disagree in principle while agreeing (or disagreeing) with regard to judgments.

While this brief discussion has been intended to suggest that problems with regard to values exist at various levels of curricular decision making, it may be more helpful to return to our hypothetical example of a judgment about sex and examine four possible types of problems or disagreements which might arise.

1. First, if we were to agree with the principle that the pleasurable is good and if we agree with the finding that sex is pleasurable, then we must logically agree with the judgment that sex is good. This is an example of normative consensus or agreement with regard to principle as well as an example of agreement with regard to the "facts" and judgment involved. Often it is assumed that this sort of agreement is a factual and/or judgmental agreement and nothing more.

2. The second possibility is that if we agree with the principle we may disagree with the "fact" that sex is pleasurable and therefore reject the judgment that sex is good. While we have essentially a factual disagreement, it should not be forgotten that we still have a case of agreement in principle.

These two possibilities may characterize much of what has passed for descriptive or supposedly non-prescriptive discussion and research within the field of curriculum. It should be obvious; however, that we are actually dealing with cases of normative consensus with regard to principle. The discussions or research characterized by these two examples appear to be non-normative only because the norm has not been called into question. For example, the discussion of the validity or reliability of IQ tests appears non-normative until minority groups or others call the principle on which they are based into question. A less loaded example for discussion might be that we can all utilize Flander's Interaction analysis procedures--even though we raise some "factual" questions--but if a question is raised as to the principle that <u>influence exerted by the teacher</u> (whether direct or indirect) is good or necessary then problems arise. This principle has, of course, been called into question in suggestions for some alternative forms of education such as radical free schools. Returning to our example of the judgment regarding sex; however, we can note two further possibilities involving disagreement or raising problems:

3. The third possibility is that we may agree with the "fact" that sex is pleasurable, but disagree with the judgment that sex is good because we disagree with the principle that the pleasurable is good.

4. The fourth possibility suggests that we might agree with the judgment that sex is good, but disagree with the principle involved in justifying the judgment--that is, disagree that the pleasurable is good. In this fourth possibility, whether or not we agree with the fact that sex is pleasurable becomes irrelevant.

In the first two possible situations with regard to the judgment about sex, we dealt with agreement in principle and with agreement and disagreement with regard to "facts". We called these examples instances of normative thinking even though the agreement with regard to the norm or principle was ignored or taken for

granted. In the third and fourth examples, we noted that disagreement with regard to principles might still allow for agreement with a judgment regardless of the acceptance or rejection of facts.

Relating what has been said to the field of curriculum, we can note that when there is overt or covert acceptance of principles, disagreements may appear to be disagreements with regard to "facts". Thus, when a principle or set of principles is accepted, curricular discussions and decisions seem to be factual decisions. When, for example, efficiency or ends-means rationality is accepted, only factual problems seem to arise with regard to making judgments relative to curricular practice. Problems arise, however, within the field of curriculum when principles are questioned--or so it would appear. However, even when principles aren't questioned, it would seem that they must be taken into account.

The real or major problem with regard to values within the field of curriculum would appear to lie in the realm of value principles. By tearing ourselves away from our scintilating discussion of sex, we may be able to suggest a basis for dealing with value principles. The question which must be addressed is: Is it possible to justify value principles on non-normative grounds? or, How do we justify value principles? If we decide that there are non-normative grounds for justifying value principles, then we are suggesting that curriculum theory viewed as a set of value principles might have non-normative justification--although we haven't the principles which might comprise such a curriculum theory.

I happen to think that it may be possible to justify value principles on non-normative grounds and, once again following Margolis' lead, think we can clarify another problem with regard to values and curriculum decisions.

Accepting Margolis' analysis, we can reject what he calls the Kantian basis for distinguishing domains of value. That is, domains of value such as aesthetics, ethics, politics, and education may be distinguished on grounds other than that of the logical characteristics of value judgments. It is this "Kantian" notion (that domains of value are distinguished on the basis of the logical characteristics of value judgments which are unique to a domain) that has probably brought us to an impass in curriculum theorizing. On the one hand, for example, we have those in curriculum who (like Tyler) accept the notion that educational value judgments or objectives are moral judgments--which is to say that they are categorical judgments in the "Kantian" sense. On the other hand, there are those who (like Macdonald) claim that educational value judgments are aesthetic or intuitive judgments in the "Kantian" sense, which is to say that they are not categorical judgments. Both groups or types of theorists accept the notion; however, that judgments are to be examined with regard to their unique logical properties and that it is these properties which distinguish domains of value. Following Margolis' lead, I suggest that it is likely that both logical types of value judgments may be found in a variety of domains of value. More specifically, I would like to argue that the field of curriculum reject its past tendency to do its axiology in the guise of epistemology or, for that matter, in the guise of ontology.

If we reject what has been termed a "Kantian" notion as the basis for distinguishing domains of value, we may be on the way to non-normative curriculum theorizing.

Curriculum theorizing might be viewed as the critical effort to establish

criteria for marking off a domain of educational value. Decisions could be made and critical analysis undertaken to determine the adequacy, coherence, or accuracy of the principles or theory put forward. Curriculum theorizing and thereby curriculum theory might be viewed as "inter-subjective" or, if you prefer, "objective" inquiry. It might even be viewed as a science--assuming we don't immediately assume that a science of curriculum must look like physics or astronomy.

A curriculum theory might now be viewed as a value principle or, more likely, as a set of principles of value. A theory would in fact be a normative statement reasoned out on non-normative grounds. For example, we might examine as a possible principle, Dewey's notion of maturity as a principle or criteria for a theory of curriculum. The theory developed around this principle or concept would be open to examination regarding coherence, adequacy and so forth.

Given this view of curriculum theorizing and theory, we might be able to view curriculum design and thereby curriculum designing as dealing with "findings" or "facts" needed to move from a principle to a judgment. In our example of the judgment regarding sex, it may be recalled, it was necessary to determine if sex is in fact pleasurable.

Finally, teaching, instructional inter- or trans-action, or other curricular practices might now be viewed as the formulation of judgments and/or the formulation of actions based on judgments of educational value.

In short, curriculum might free itself from its eternal distinction and flight back and forth between theory and practice and enter the realm of PRAXIS (or, as Dewey was wont to call it, the realm of the practicable) and thereby be able to deal with both theory and practice.

Given what has been said, it is possible that the position of the field of curriculum might not be unlike that in the "real" sciences where a distinction is often made between theoretical and applied research or between, as Schwab has termed it, fluid and static inquiry.